



Genie Trucking Line, Inc.

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July 15, 1996

QA-20603
FHWA-97-2299-21

LEGS/REGS. DIV.

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FEDERAL HIGHWAY
ADMINISTRATION

Federal Highway Administration
Office of Chief Counsel
HCC-10, Rm. 4232
400 7th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20590

Comments in Re: FHWA Docket MC96-18

1. Keep the current safety rating categories. Shippers and insurance companies use them to evaluate carriers.
2. We rate contractors on accidents and moving violations. We will not hire if a contractor exceeds 2 total and will terminate a contract if the contractor exceeds a total of 3 accidents/moving violations in a 3 year period. A non chargeable accident occurs when another vehicle runs into our vehicle. We count and record all incidents. It is very difficult to separate preventable and non preventable accidents, except in clear cut situations i.e. our unit was forced to change lanes on an interstate and was forced into the medial strip to avoid a vehicle entering the highway from a ramp.
3. Many motor carriers feel that there are wide variations in state and local police methods in reporting accidents. Some police are hostile to truck drivers without provocation. Some police will not identify the cause of an accident, even when it is apparent. There should be an all out effort to standardize accident reporting by establishing federal standards. Though FHWA does some training now, it appears to be mostly concentrated on inspections. Standardizing police accident reporting would be a great aid to the trucking and insurance industries. Encouraging greater professionalism amongst police officers would help our industry. They should meet the professional standards of FHWA officers.
4. To us, the most significant, measurable factors in determining a driver's potential performance is his motor vehicle record and the geographic area of his driving experience. A driver who knows his territory will not get into traffic predicaments that can cause accidents. Also, the stability of the driver's persona can be adduced in the personal interview.

5. FHWA must include shippers and particularly consignees when looking at safety related matters. Carriers will not "blow the whistle" on their customers. Many consignees hold drivers hostage, for no apparent reason, causing a driver to be late for his next pick up. These delays disgruntle truck drivers and put them on the road with the wrong attitude. We recognize that some of the problems are caused by drivers who demand action and approach the shipper/consignee in an uncooperative manner. Carriers must screen drivers more closely to eliminate truck drivers who do not behave professionally. But an analysis of shipper/consignee practices by FHWA could lead to substantial improvements in driver performance.

6. Lumpers are a cause for safety concerns. Since certain consignees accept no responsibility for receiving freight and force the carrier (in many cases the shipper) to hire lumpers or have the driver unload the trailer, there is the potential for the driver to opt to pocket the unloading fee himself, which can be a factor in driver fatigue. All consignees should be responsible for providing unloading labor for their shipments.

7. If a carrier makes continual and serious efforts to police log violations, FHWA should fine the drivers rather than fine the carrier. This would be a great incentive to encourage driver compliance.

8. We do not note any relationship between hours of service and our accident rate. The primary causal factor is traffic congestion.

9. We strongly support the driver fatigue studies, but think the hours of service rules should be opened for trucking company recommendations to FHWA.

10. States should not fine carriers or drivers for violations. FHWA should and there should be a national standard for fines. States should not use inspection fines as a source of revenue. State officers have an incentive to generate revenue rather than promote safe trucking operations.

11. This industry has a productivity problem. A unit should not have to go through more than 1 inspection on a thousand mile trip. A clean inspection in any state should exonerate that unit from any further inspections for 30 days.

12. We note that some very small carriers are either unaware of regulations or violate them for their own purposes. They appear to be adept at avoiding inspections. We believe a stronger effort should be mounted to visit the home office of each and every carrier to ascertain compliance.

In our opinion FHWA has demonstrated consistent professionalism and have been helpful.

The motor carrier industry is improving its performance, but we note a distinct lack of competence and courtesy in the auto driving public.

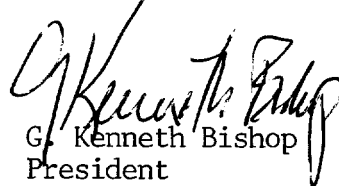
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There should be a major study to address factors impacting productivity in our industry and FHWA should participate.

Yours very truly,

Genie Trucking Line, Inc.


G. Kenneth Bishop
President

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